



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month ***State Health Department Stresses Importance of Early Detection***

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging North Dakotans to make early screening and detection a tool for a healthy life, according to Mary Ann Foss, director of the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control for the Department of Health.

“Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among North Dakotans,” Foss said. “The good news is that colorectal cancer is preventable and easily detected.”

Early detection is the key to fighting colorectal cancer. The Department of Health offers these important points about colorectal cancer:

- If you are older than 50, see your doctor to get screened. For those with a family history of the disease, screening should begin earlier.
- Colorectal cancer and precancerous polyps don’t always cause symptoms.
- Colorectal cancer affects both men and women equally.
- When found early, colorectal cancer treatment can be very effective.
- Many insurance plans help pay for screenings that can detect colorectal cancer.

“In 2004, colorectal cancer was diagnosed in more than 400 North Dakotans and nearly half died from the disease,” said Dr. Doug Berglund, surgeon at Medcenter One Health Systems, Bismarck, and member of the North Dakota Cancer Coalition. “If every North Dakotan 50 or older were screened regularly, we could prevent as many as 60 percent of deaths from colorectal cancer.”

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Today, several testing methods are available to find colorectal cancer. The Department of Health and the North Dakota Cancer Coalition encourage all North Dakotans to consult their health-care provider about which type of screening test best suits their age, health history or health needs.

During March, National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, the national *Screen for Life* campaign will stress the importance of cancer screening and early detection. Public service announcements for radio and television that feature Katie Couric, Jimmy Smits, Morgan Freeman and Diane Keaton promoting colorectal cancer screening will be seen and heard on stations across North Dakota.

For more information about colorectal cancer, visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/ or contact Mary Ann Foss, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2333.

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